

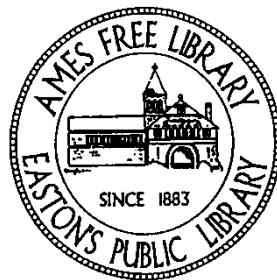
Community Innovation Challenge Grant Final Report  
FY 2013

Developing the Creative Commons at the  
Ames Free Library's Queset House



A collaborative Project of the  
Ames Free Library / Easton's Public Library  
and the  
Town of Easton

April 1, 2014



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## **Introductory Letter**

April 1, 2014

Secretary Glen Shor  
Community Innovation Challenge Grant Program  
Executive Office for Administration and Finance  
Massachusetts State House, Room 373  
Boston, MA 01233

Dear Secretary Shor:

The Town of Easton's rich heritage includes significant architectural treasures such as the Ames Free Library, a national historic landmark building designed by H.H. Richardson, and its adjacent Queset House and Garden. Several years ago, the Ames Free Library Board of Directors authorized the purchase of the house, a 19<sup>th</sup> century mansion, as expansion space for library programming. While the staff and board have had many plans for using this unique facility, it is just now, as a result of the Community Innovation Challenge (CIC) grant and other funding sources, ready to emerge as a creative, or learning, commons.

With the help of the CIC grant, Easton showcased the creative reuse of an old building while providing an innovative and cost effective approach to community education.

The CIC grant offered us the opportunity to electronically equip two rooms, a Digital Media Laboratory and the Educational/Business Presentation Room. With other income, including Community Preservation Act Funds and private bequests, the Library Board made the building fully accessible for persons with disabilities by adding a three-floor elevator, by renovating restrooms, and by providing an outdoor ramped access and parking area. The electronic infrastructure was also substantially upgraded and the building made fully wireless for internet connectivity.

The challenges faced throughout these developments mostly concerned the physical renovations which, at all times, needed to be in keeping with the historical ambiance of the surroundings. For example, turning a wood-paneled dining room into a movie screening room required hiding both the screen and the projector from view.

The library's goals for Queset House are to expand services that support the growing technological and informational needs of the Easton community before the digital learning curve becomes overwhelming to many. The house, with its classic exterior, now offers a savvy, high-tech interior. Its many rooms, taken together, offer a multiple-use learning hub to integrate technology, information, and collaborative expertise.

At the Digital Media Lab people of all ages can collaborate at large-screen computers loaded with advanced software for creative activities such as graphic design, film, and music making. Scanners, cameras, printers, camcorders and other equipment provide the tools for innovation. A

self-service set-up, users can walk into the lab with their co-creators or business partners and use a computer loaded with relevant software to create digital posters, documentaries, brochures, music, etc.

In the Education/Business Presentation Room, the CIC grant funded the installation of a 70-inch TV monitor and a high-tech control system for sound, lights, and multimedia presentations. The installation also allows for simulcasting with other rooms in the building so spillover audiences can be accommodated. Thanks to the grant, we were able to equip this room at a level beyond a barebones conference room, which not only makes for great library programming, but additionally makes it attractive for use by small and home-based businesses. The grant has therefore helped expand both the program space for the library and introduced a welcome and needed rental revenue stream to help support future innovations.

These highly developed spaces provide the technology tools not only for the library but also for the Oliver Ames High School, the Easton Council on Aging, Town Hall administration, Easton Cable Television, and others. The CIC grant supported an initial project management budget that is being used to create programming for and with these constituents.

The innovative ideas espoused by the Ames Free Library are catching like wildfire in libraries throughout the county and, as a result of the visibility of this project, can help change the role of libraries in the Commonwealth. Staff is following trends that are evolving from the 'makerspace' movement, whereby individuals are becoming more interested in personal creativity and not solely in receiving information. The learning commons @ Queset House initiative was featured as the opening presentation at the annual Legislative Breakfast held on February 7, 2014 and attended by State Legislators and librarians.

Local governments that are able to expand the role of the public library as a locus for town activities and citizen education are using an already funded source of books and media, computer equipment and infrastructure, and professional librarian expertise to provide new forms of educational opportunities. A well-equipped learning commons can provide the location, education, and inspiration for all.

We are grateful to the staff at the Executive Office for Administration and Finance for recognizing the innovative approach of our project, for all their support, and for the funds that helped energize the process.

Sincerely,



Uma Hiremath  
Executive Director  
Ames Free Library

## **Executive Summary**

Public libraries, traditionally the peoples' universities, are evolving into centers for creativity and collaboration. Forward thinking librarians are offering to their communities the tools and the space to advance their patrons' understanding and involvement in the digital age.

As the Ames Free Library staff became aware of this trend, it started working to convert the library-owned Queset House from a 19<sup>th</sup> century home into a creative commons. The house, adjacent to the library, would provide meeting and study spaces as well as laboratories for embarking on digital learning. The goal was to create a center for high-tech activities in an elegant, low-tech setting.

The Community Innovation Challenge Grant provided the budget to equip two of the most important rooms directly related to the goals of the creative commons, a Digital Media Lab and an Education/Business Center. Other funds were provided by the library board and town of Easton.

The challenges involved were mostly outside of the goals of the CIC grant. They included renovations for building and restroom access. A three-story elevator was needed as well as new electrical service, lighting, rewiring, and plumbing. Normal construction delays due to permitting, weather, etc. were tolerated.

The creative commons concept was easily promoted to the community, since many, young and old, are in jeopardy of either falling into a 'digital gap,' or anxious to explore their creativity with the help of community mentors and colleagues.

One of the goals of the project was to ensure program development with and for Oliver Ames High School and the Easton Council on Aging. The creative commons offers these groups and others program space that is extremely limited in Easton.

With the additional recognition provided by winning the CIC grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office for Administration and Finance, we were easily able to publicize the goals of the project and gain community support.

## **Section I: Partner Communities**

The Ames Free Library is the lead applicant for this project and staff and board members carried out the goals of the grant.

Since the Queset House is designed to serve the needs of other community groups, the following entities have been actively involved:

- Town of Easton
- Oliver Ames High School
- Easton Council on Aging
- Easton Community Access Television
- Stonehill College

Representatives from these groups have attended planning meetings as well as events such as a pre-opening party, tour, and film showing.

Some examples of cooperative projects include a new film making workshop for Oliver Ames High School students and a series of “Tech Talks” aimed at the interests of senior citizens, such as computer security and digital photography. Easton Community Access TV provides technical support to help broadcast library programs at Queset House via cable TV and also plans to assist with film editing workshops.

Stonehill College supports us by listing internship and volunteer openings in their jobs database. We are also mining contacts among the professors to use Queset House as a speaking venue and to host workshops and discussion groups.

## **Section 2: Goals**

The goals of this project are to:

- Expand traditional library services by developing a multiple-use learning hub at Queset House, a library owned property;
- Equip Queset House with state-of-the art technology tools and provide a location for meetings, seminars, workshops, and projects for youth and adults;
- Integrate information, technology, and collaborative expertise to support lifelong learning and digital media creativity;
- Coordinate activities at Queset House with Oliver Ames High School and the Easton Council on Aging, and other town groups; and
- Foster an environment that is open, forward-looking and responsive to the learning needs of the community in a world that is dramatically changing.

Some low- or high-tech, solo or collaborative activities that can be done at Queset House include:

### *Low-tech:*

- Watch and show films and/or presentations
- Create dynamic flyers, posters, resumes, programs, newsletter, etc.
- Edit a short film
- Burn and label a CD
- Transfer VHS to DVD/Digital
- Transfer 35mm slides to digital
- Edit photos
- Create digital artwork
- Create a webpage, blog, digital photo album, etc.

### *Hi-tech:*

- Create a short film
- Create an audio CD using your own recordings/mixes
- Create your own manga/graphic novel/comic book
- Create your own published work (book, poem, etc.) and turn into an eBook
- Scan and digitally produce a completed quilt square or pattern
- Create a video game
- Create/edit a podcast

An example of a creative project underway is the Ames Free Library's film production, in collaboration with the Easton Historical Society, documenting the history of the library from the memories of many people involved during the past 20 years.

### **Section 3: Implementation Plan**

This implementation plan required management of several tracks: physical renovations, audiovisual and computer installations, and program planning. The physical renovations, including electrical, networking, and accessibility projects were funded outside of the CIC grant. Two major program rooms were funded by the grant and these were installed when other physical renovations were complete. To ensure success of the project, program planning was ongoing. We were able to keep the goals of the project in sight throughout renovations and delays by hosting an early pre-opening party, by using the new spaces as they became available, and by publicizing the ongoing work at Queset House.

#### *March-June*

- Networking and electrical work

*Networking:* Installed wireless routers on three floors; Established communication to main library via VPN.

*Electrical work:* Completed upgrade from 220 to 400 amp service to support new elevator, sprinkler and surveillance systems; selected and installed lighting fixtures.

- Installation of the Education/Business Center

Installed audiovisual equipment: 70” flat screen HDTV, in-ceiling speakers, audio and video processing components (SONY Receiver, Blu-Ray DVD, APPLE TV adapter, Ethernet outlets, etc.).

Installed furniture and carpeting: 30 stackable chairs and 8, 48-in. tilt-top training tables on wheels for easy room reconfiguration.

- Installation of the Digital Media Lab

Postponed ordering Digital Media Lab items until after electrical work and other renovations completed.

Reviewed DML equipment plan with Oliver Ames High School staff.

- Other

Moved ahead in developing collaborations with the Easton school librarians, Stonehill College and the Martin Institute, and the Whale Lab at Wheaton College.

#### *July–September*

- Training and mentors recruited



Training and recruiting plans fell behind the original schedule, due to ongoing work in the house. We were not discouraged by these delays since Queset House is seen as a unique and exciting community venture and we continued meeting with contacts including high school media and Stonehill College personnel in preparation for a tech mentor recruiting campaign.

We developed both volunteer and internship job descriptions and posted them on the Stonehill job site. We also planned, with a former Stonehill student, a series of workshops at the Education/Business Center

- Opening event

Despite delays, we did conduct a gala “soft” opening event in the CIC-funded Education/Business Center which was completed with the installation of audiovisual equipment, lighting, and sound systems. Invitees included major donors, board members, and others who have worked with the library on this and other projects.

About 60 people attended this event, at the premier showing of a film, *A Walk in Easton’s Woods*, produced by the library staff with funds granted by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners through the Library Services and Technology Act program. The film narrators included Chet Raymo and Ed Hands, both local personalities.

The 30 people in the CIC-funded room and 30 in the first floor presentation room were truly amazed at the visual and audio quality of the new systems as well as the beauty of the surroundings.

- Other

Digital Media Lab

Equipment purchasing for the Digital Media Lab was again postponed because the DML is adjacent to two new restrooms and construction debris invading the areas where equipment would be placed was an issue.

Renovation Projects

Queset House infrastructure projects moved forward substantially during this period. These included the installation and operation of the three-floor elevator, the reconstruction of hallways leading to the elevator, and new restrooms to accommodate accessibility requirements. A significant amount of carpentry and decorating, including lighting replacement, floor refinishing, furniture and carpet acquisition, and plumbing was done with some milestones met while others were still pending.

- **Sustainability Plan**

The sustainability plan is based on utilizing the CIC-funded project manager budget to seed the program plan, that is, schedule a sufficient number of programs to attract a wide variety of audiences and age levels, energize experts to step forward to create ongoing programming, and teach staff and students to assist users in their endeavors.

The plan offers temporary part-time positions to talented community members who have worked with the Ames Free Library in the past. They are providing programming and hands-on expertise for the opening months of the learning commons.

These topical experts include a “maker-in-residence,” to demonstrate and train others in 3-D printing and robotics, a creative writing coach, a social media consultant, a business marketing expert, and a developer of workshops for restoring and digitizing family photos, and making movies.

In most cases, these project managers will create website content, train staff and students, and assist the library staff in marketing their projects. This approach provides a good foundation to sustain the ongoing development of programs and use of Queset House.

Programs offered at the Queset House include:

**Open workshops to build expertise for the digital age**

Using Your New eReader

New Tablets Users Groups – iPad, Android

New Smartphone Users Groups – Apple, Android, Windows

Google Drive

Watching Movies & TV Online

Introduction to MOOCs – Massive Open Online Courses

**Small group hands-on sessions in the new Digital Media Lab**

Digitizing Your Family Photos

Photoshop

Audio Production

Introduction to Movie Making

Design your own APPS

Podcasting

**Fee-based workshops for local businesses**

How to Start an Online Business

How to Start a Blog to Market Your Business

How to Manage Online Privacy

## **Section 4: Budget**

### *Total Project Budget*

The library board appropriated \$260,000 from endowment funding for the renovations required at Queset House for electrical upgrades, a 3-floor elevator, restroom reconstruction, and furnishings. To this was added a \$70,000 Community Preservation Act grant for accessibility projects and safety measures including an alarm system.

The CIC grant funded the *creative* side of the creative commons, that is, both the audiovisual equipment and the personnel support to create a sustainable program plan.

### *CIC Funded Budget*

Education/Business Center	
Equipment	\$12,000
Labor	\$ 3,000
Digital Media Lab	
Equipment	\$ 8,500
Software	\$ 2,000
Project Manager	<u>\$14,500</u>
Total Budget:	\$40,000

The library equipped two rooms, an Education/Business Center and a Digital Media Lab, and initiated programming within the scope of this budget.

- Educational/Business Center

The methodology that led to our budget request included obtaining proposals and quotes from different kinds of equipment vendors and systems integrators. We chose an Easton company, *AudioVideo Intelligence*, for their experience in installing and supporting high-tech and high-end presentation rooms. Their reputation as a local company that had won an Easton Chamber of Commerce award was also a factor. We needed a company with a local presence that would ensure support.

- Digital Media Lab

For the Digital Media Lab, we were able to use buying lists from other libraries that pioneered these service centers such as the public libraries in Skokie, IL and Darien, CT. Based on that information and on our own experience of our patrons' needs, we purchased the following Digital Media Lab tools:

Computers, Printers, and Scanners

- One 27" Mac
- Two 21" Macs

- Wireless printer
- Photo scanner

For the film maker:

- 3 external DVD burners
- 1 DVD label burner
- 2 external hard drives
- Microphone with receiver and adapter and table top stand

For the graphic artist:

- 2 tablets with stylus
- Software for production of Anime and Manga

For the photographer:

- Camera
- Software, such as Photoshop Elements and Stop Motion Animation
- Portable green screen
- Studio lighting on stand
- Mini studio box for EBay photos

For podcasters/ radio plays/ voiceovers/ oral history/ basic musicians:

- 1 microphone
- 3 headphones
- Software, such as Garage Band.

- Project Management

The project management budget was based on hiring temporary staff to supervise programming and mentor recruitment activities. The staffing plan was and is based on the premise that community expertise from both professionals and local high school and college students can be marshaled to provide coverage, teaching, and mentoring. The project management budget allowed for personnel to start up this plan.

A portion of this budget is also being used to develop a marketing plan for recruiting local businesses to use the Education/Business Center and other rooms to provide revenue for the ongoing maintenance of the Queset House.

## **Section 5: Challenges and Solutions**

The challenges we faced mostly concerned delays due to construction projects. With major demolition and reconstruction of bathroom spaces, hallways and roof for the elevator shaft, and the redesign of the front entrance, the staff had to cope with postponing exciting plans for programming.

Elevators require state inspection and these are performed by very few personnel and on their own limited timetable.

While a firm opening date slipped several times, we went ahead with an invitation-only special event to give selected constituents a sneak preview of the work in progress. We also allowed selected organizations to use rooms that were completed.

On the conceptual side of our challenges, we were confronted early on that our terminology, i.e., The Creative Commons @ Queset House, was inappropriate as far as the internet community is concerned. “Creative Commons” is now widely used to describe software that is freely shared among developers. While we have been loosely using the terminology “learning commons” to describe the project, we are hoping for a truly expressive label to emerge from our creative community.

## **Section 6: Outcomes**





The measurable outcomes for this project were to increase library statistics by 15% at the end of the grant year and by 25% by end of the first 12 months. Relevant measures are daily visits, program attendance, computer users, and increase in number of volunteers and volunteer hours.

Due to delays in fully opening the Queset House, this statistical growth will be tracked over the next year, starting in April 2014.

Setbacks, which were mostly in timing, while frustrating, were never fully discouraging due to the intrinsically exciting nature of the project. Ames Free Library staff members are good marketers and kept visibility high through personal contacts, presentations at meetings, frequent board committee meetings, staff briefings.

We also began offering use of the space to outside groups as soon as feasible and safe, despite ongoing construction. These events included the film showings of the Hockomock Film Club, a Holiday Crafts Fair and High Tea, and seminars for the Senior Service Network of the South Shore.

The library director and assistant director were invited to present the project at the Massachusetts Library Legislative Breakfast in February 2014, Middleboro. Due to their own passion for this project they were able to ignite a group of librarians and legislators who will look to them as leaders in these types of library programs statewide.

PROJECT GOAL	MEASURE		CURRENT PERIOD	PRIOR PERIOD	TREND	TARGET	STATUS	COMMENTS
To create the Creative Commons program at the Ames Free Library's Queset House	% of new visitors at the end of 6 months		8,600/mo.			15%		Goal is 9,890 visitors per month in 6 months after opening April 11, 2014
	% of new visitors by the end of 12 months					25%		Goal is 10,750 visitors per month after 12 months
	% of new adult computer program users at the end of six months		677			15%		Goal is 780 users per month in 6 months after opening
	% of new adult computer program users at the end of twelve months					25%		Goal is 846 users per month after 12 months
	# of volunteer hours will increase		140 per month					Goal is 160 per month after 6 months; 175 after 12 months
STATUS LEGEND	OFF TARGET:		CLOSE TO TARGET		ON TARGET:		NOT APPLICABLE:	

## **Contact Information**

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## **References**

Press coverage from Easton Patch: [“Ames Free Library Receives \\$40 Thousand State Grant For 'Creative Commons' at Queset House: Easton won a portion of the Community Innovation Challenge Grant”](#)

## **Resources**

### **Links to Libraries with Collaborative Space**

[Digital Media Lab – Darien Library, CT](#)

[Maker Space – Westport Public Library, Westport, CT](#)

[FabLab – Fayetteville Free Library, Fayetteville, NY](#)

[Allen County Public Library – TekVenture, Allen County, IN](#)

[ThinkeringSpace - IIT Institute of Design, Chicago, IL](#)

[YOUmedia - Chicago Public Library, Chicago, IL](#)

[Digital Media Lab - Skokie Public Library, Skokie, IL](#)

[TechCentral – Cleveland Public Library, Cleveland, OH](#)

[Digital Projects Lab – Arlington Public Library, Arlington, VA](#)

[YOUmedia – Miami-Dade Public Library System, Miami, FL](#)

[Urban Mediaspace – Aarhus Library, Aarhus, Denmark](#)